

## Racial Categories Used in the Decennial Censuses, 1790 to the Present

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Measuring the increase in racial diversity in the United States has received growing interest for the last three decades. The topic was of concern to the founding fathers, who categorized inhabitants using such terms as "White," "free person," or "slave." We continue to categorize people by race.

This article examines decennial census questionnaires, enumerator instructions, and actual categories used to define the race groups in this country from 1790 to the present to document the country's efforts to categorize its racial populations. The influence of political and social conditions will become obvious as we journey through the archives of census schedules and enumerator instructions on how people have been categorized racially in this country.

The decision on how to categorize people of color in the 1790 census was influenced by the Constitution which provided that:

Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other Persons. The actual Enumeration shall be made within three years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct.<sup>1</sup>

Over the years politics have continued to play a vital role in influencing the number of racial categories and the definitions that might influence how people identify themselves. Policy concerns and changing social attitudes, as well as changes in the racial makeup of

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the population, have contributed to how people are categorized racially in America and how these data are used by the federal government.

As used in the United States, the concept of race has always reflected social usage with little or no reference to biology, anthropology, or genetics. For 200 years, inhabitants of the United States were categorized in one and only one race group. As we embrace the new millennium, respondents will be given the option of reporting one or more races on their Census 2000 questionnaire.

Also evident will be the increasing use over the decades of data on race for political, social, and economic reasons. The federal government uses these data to monitor equal access for all people in housing, education, employment, and other areas. Since 1790, data on race or color have been used by states for redistricting and other political purposes. Local governments also use these data for planning purposes, such as for deciding where a senior citizen or daycare center should be built. Business communities use these data to help develop and implement market strategies for providing products and services. Academicians use these data in all of their research in human behavioral sciences. These data have also been used to depict the increasing racial diversity in this country.

In this article, we identify and examine the categories used in the decennial censuses to illustrate how America has captured and measured its racial populations.

#### FROM 1790 TO 1840

From 1790 to 1840, United States marshals conducted the census. The law required that every household be visited and that completed census schedules be posted for public review. The censuses of 1790 through 1840 were censuses of households; only the names of household heads appeared on the schedule. The schedules varied considerably for each geographic area because there was no uniform format by which data were to be collected. Instructions were provided on the kind of information that was needed, and each marshal determined how these data would be formatted. Some used columns to record data whereas others used single sheets of paper.

"The six inquiries in 1790 called for the name of the head of the family and the number of people in each household of the following descriptions: free White males of 16 years and upward, free White males under 16 years, free White females, all other free persons, and slaves."<sup>2</sup> In both the 1800 and 1810 censuses, marshals were required to collect additional information, such as the census of manufacturing and agriculture. The 1820 schedule used in Massachusetts had a boxhead spanner for "Free Colored Persons" similar to those for Free White Males and Females. It was not until the 1830 census that a uniform printed schedule was used by all Enumerators.

From 1790 to 1840, the vast majority of the "Non-White" population was "Colored." In 1830, Whites represented about 82% of the population of the United States as enumerated, but only 65% of the population inhabiting the now continental United States. With the continued decimation of the American Indian population, the abolition of the African slave trade, and the continuing immigration from Europe, Whites grew to about 86% of the population in 1860.

(12½"x17½", printed on two sides, space for 40 entries on each side)

SCHEDULE 2.—Slave Inhabitants in \_\_\_\_\_ in the County of \_\_\_\_\_ State  
of \_\_\_\_\_, enumerated by me, on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 1850. Ass't Marshal

NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.	Number of Slaves.	DESCRIPTION.				Age & Sex.	Whether imported or born here.	Color & rank, male, female, or infant.
		M.	F.	C.	B.			
I	W	N	E	A	S	V	H	
1								1
2								2
3								3
4								4
5								5

NAMES OF SLAVE OWNERS.	Number of Slaves.	DESCRIPTION.				Age & Sex.	Whether imported or born here.	Color & rank, male, female, or infant.
		M.	F.	C.	B.			
I	W	N	E	A	S	V	H	
1								1
2								2
3								3
4								4
5								5

Figure 1  
1850 Census

A number of changes occurred in the decennial census with respect to race between 1850 and 1890. A specified column entitled "Color" was established and attempts were made to differentiate the Black population into full-blooded Blacks and Mulattoes, or people of color. Efforts were made to count American Indians on and off reservations and to obtain information on their tribal affiliation. Chinese and Japanese were enumerated in selected states initially and then included on the printed schedules thereafter.

The 1850 census was a watershed census in that Congress established a Census Board that included the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, and the Postmaster General, and provided a full-time secretary who also directed the census.<sup>3</sup> Unlike previous censuses, the 1850 census was the first where the individual was the unit of enumeration. A specific column labeled “Color” was introduced, along with separate schedules for “Free Inhabitants” and “Slave Inhabitants” (see Figure 1). On the Free Inhabitants schedule, under the heading “Color,” marshals and their assistants were instructed to leave the column blank if the individual was White, insert the letter “B” if the person was Black, and the letter “M” for all people considered Mulatto.

The 1850 census was the first one to use the terms "Black" and "Mulatto," but no specific instructions were given as to how one was to differentiate Black from Mulatto inhabitants. Specific instructions were not provided for how people of color, such as Indians and Asians, were to be counted, but specific instructions were provided to count such individuals. These instructions read "It is very desirable that these particulars be carefully regarded."<sup>4</sup> There is some doubt whether the small number of taxed Indians were counted with the White or with the Colored population before the 1860 census. Table 1 lists the race categories used in the 1850 through 1990 censuses.

Table 1  
Racial Terms Used in Census Enumeration Schedules 1850 to 1990

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
Aleut														X	X
American Indian		X									X	X			
Asian Indian														X	X
Black	X	X	X			X	X	X							
Black or Negro														X	X
Chinese		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eskimo												X	X	X	X
Filipino									X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guamanian														X	X
Hawaiian												X	X	X	X
Hindu									X	X					
Indian			X			X	X	X	X	X					
Indian (Amer.)														X	X
Japanese			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Korean									X	X					
Mexican									X						
Mulatto	X	X	X				X	X							
Negro						X			X	X	X	X			
Negro or Black														X	
Octoroon					X										
Other						X	X	X						X	X
Other API															
Other race									X	X	X				X
Part Hawaiian												X			
Quadroon					X										
Samoa															
Vietnamese														X	X
White	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Population in the U.S. Decennial Censuses: 1790-1970" Working Paper 39 (1973); Twenty Censuses: Population and Housing Questions, 1790-1970 (1979); Bryant Robey, "Two Hundred Years and Counting: The 1990 Census" *Population Bulletin*, 44 (1) (Apr. 1989).

### Census of 1860

The racial categories used in the 1860 census were identical to those in the 1850 census. Much like the 1850 census, the 1860 census used a separate schedule for slaves.

The 1860 Census, however, was the first census in which Indians were separately identified. The term "Civilized Indians" was used to differentiate those Indians living among the general population and subject to taxation from those living in other areas of the country. Enumerators were instructed to write "Ind" to indicate that the person was an Indian. These Indians were presumably living in areas adjacent to settlements and not on reservations. Not until the 1890 census were Indians on reservations or in Indian territory included in the population count.

The 1860 census was also the first to include information for "Chinese" or "Mongolian" but did so only in the state of California. The recording of Chinese in the census was the result of policy concerns resulting from increasing immigration to this country. Many of the Chinese came to this country as contract laborers to work on the Central Pacific Railroad.

(12½"x17½", printed on two sides, space for 40 entries on each side)

(left)

Page No. \_\_\_\_\_ }      Inquiries numbered 7, 16, and 17 are not to be

SCHEDULE 1.—Inhabitants in \_\_\_\_\_  
of \_\_\_\_\_, enumerated by me on the \_\_\_\_\_  
*Post Office:* \_\_\_\_\_

Dwellings—houses, numbered in the order of valuation.	Families, numbered in the order of valuation.	The name of every person whose place of abode on the first day of June, 1870, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION.				Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each person, male or female.
			1. Age at last birth-day; and whether living in England, Wales, &c.	2. Sex—Male (M.) Female (F.)	3. Color—White (W.), Black (B.), Mulatto (M.), Chi- nese (C.), Indian (I.).		
1	2	3	4	5	6		7
1							
2							
3							

Figure 2  
1870 Census

## Census of 1870

Racial categories used in the 1870 census built on previous censuses. Again, using the heading "Color," enumerators indicated the race of the inhabitants of the country. At least two separate schedules were again used to collect these data—one for the general population and one for Indians. The 1870 census categories included finer distinctions of the populations. Enumerators were instructed not to leave the space blank if the individual was White, but rather to write "W" for White, "B" for Black, "M" for Mulatto, "C" for Chinese, and "I" for Indian (see Figure 2).

The 1870 census differed from the previous census in that Japanese were also counted in the state of California. Specific instructions also were given with respect to the recording of Mulattoes and Indians:

The word is here generic, and includes quadroons, octoroons, and all persons

having any perceptible trace of African blood. Important scientific results depend upon the correct determination of this class in schedules 1 and 2.<sup>6</sup>

Indians not taxed are not to be enumerated on schedule 1. Indians out of their tribal relations, and exercising the rights of citizens under State or Territorial laws, will be included. In all cases write "Ind." in the column for "Color." Although no provision is made for the enumeration of "Indians not taxed," it is highly desirable, for statistical purposes, that the number of such persons not living upon reservations should be known. Assistant marshals are therefore requested, where such persons are found within their subdivisions, to make a separate memorandum of names, with sex and age, and embody the same in a special report to the census office.<sup>7</sup>

### Census of 1880

The census act for 1880 provided for the establishment of a census office in the Department of Interior and the appointment, by the President, of a superintendent of the census for the duration of the census. An important change for the 1880 census was the use of specially appointed supervisors and enumerators in place of the marshals and their assistants. A census office was established. The 1880 census marked the beginning of the modern era of census taking in the methods of enumeration and their control, and in the subjects for which data were to be collected, as well as the detail collected on each topic. The number of items on the questionnaire was expanded. The practice of first issuing the results of the census taking in printed preliminary reports was also introduced.

The 1880 census included the same racial categories as the 1870 census, but the phrase "Indians not taxed" was omitted from the schedule. "This term meant Indians living on reservations under the care of government agents, or roaming individually, or in bands, over unsettled tracts of the country."<sup>8</sup> All other Indians were to be regarded as a part of the ordinary population for the constitutional purpose of the apportionment of Representatives among the states, and were included in the enumeration.

### Census of 1890

The census of 1890 provided a separate schedule for each family. A distinguishing feature of this census was the introduction of punchcards and electric tabulating machines for processing the data. Racial categories used in the 1890 census were similar to those used earlier. However, the categories were expanded and included a combination of color, tribal status, and Asian national origin groups. Results of this census also reflected the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which suspended immigration of Chinese laborers.

The 1890 question on color or race differed in that the word "race" was no longer used in the column where enumerators recorded the racial designations (see Figure 3).

Efforts were also made to further categorize the Black population. The 1890 census was the first census to specify a blood quantum to categorize either Black or Mulatto. Specific instructions were given to:

Be particularly careful to distinguish between blacks, mulattoes, quadroons, and octoroons. The word "black" should be used to describe those persons who have three-fourths or more black blood; "mulatto," those persons who have from

"SCHEDULE NO. 1—POPULATION AND SOCIAL STATISTICS"  
(11½"x18", printed on both sides)

(front, top)

FAMILY SCHEDULE—1 TO 10 PERSONS					
Supervisor's District No. _____		[2-5363]		Eleventh Census of the United States.	
Enumeration District No. _____		SCHEDULE No. 1			
POPULATION AND SOCIAL STATISTICS					
Name of city, town, township, precinct, district, ward, or other local division _____		County _____		State _____	
Street and No. _____		Ward _____		Name of Institution _____	
Enumerated by me on the _____ day of June, 1890.					
A.—Number of Dwelling-houses in the order of visitation.		B.—Number of Families in this dwelling-house.	C.—Number of persons in this dwelling-house.	D.—Number of Family in the order of visitation.	E.—No. of Persons in this family.
INQUIRIES.	1	2	3	4	5
1. What is name of head, and initials of wife or name?					
2. What is name, rank, or office, during the war (1861-65), of each male 15 or over?					
3. Relationship to head of family.					
4. Whether white, black, mulatto, quadroon, octoroon, Chinese, Japanese, or Indian.					
5. Sex.					
6. Age at census taking up. If under ten years, give age in months.					
7. Whether single, married, widowed, or divorced.					
8. Whether married, during the war (1861-65), to May 31, 1868.					
9. Whether of free native children and persons of color, children living.					

Figure 3  
1890 Census

three-eighths to five-eighths black blood; "quadroon," those persons who have one-fourth black blood; and "octoroon," "those persons who have one-eighth or any trace of black blood."<sup>9</sup>

This effort to further divide the Black population represented the concerns of southern politicians over racial purity. After the emancipation of slaves, it became increasingly important to differentiate full-blooded Blacks from Mulattoes, Quadroons, and Octoroons. In earlier censuses, the Black population had been categorized as either free or slave.

The 1890 census was also the first to include a count of the total Indian population using both the general schedule and a supplemental schedule for Indians living within the jurisdiction of the United States. Individuals were considered Indians if they were full-blooded, if they were enrolled by a tribe or registered at an Indian agency, or if those who knew them considered them Indians. Results concerning the number of Indians from this census were probably not accurate since in previous censuses some were counted as White, whereas the 1890 census included as Indians all individuals having any trace of Indian blood. Some Mexicans may also have been counted as Indians.

The 1890 census was the first one where the Japanese population was formally counted; however, a small number of Japanese were identified in the 1870 and 1880 censuses, only in California.

### FROM 1900 TO 1990—ALMOST A CENTURY OF CHANGES

The period from 1900 to 1990 was characterized by a quest for equal participation under the law by all people in America, the institutionalization of race as a measure of stratification in our society, the struggle to capture and document the increasing racial diversity of the country, and the need for and use of data on race to chronicle the changing attitudes and perception about America. Racial categories used in the 1900 to 1990 censuses depict the growth in America from a predominately bi-racial (White/Black) society to one composed of many diverse groups. The categories used to categorize the population racially also illustrate the influence of politics and America's attempt to deal with past discrimination based on race. Blacks, American Indians, Asians, and Pacific Islanders have all experienced some form of institutionalized or state-sanctioned discrimination. Laws, such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act, sought to correct past practices of discrimination against Blacks. Several laws were passed to address the injustices suffered by American Indians, who have a long history of forced residential patterns. Also, immigration laws prohibited Chinese from coming to America during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Census of 1900

The question content in the 1900 census was nearly identical to that in the 1890 census. Racial categories recorded in the 1900 census under the column "Color or race" were "W" for White, "B" for Black (Negro or of Negro descent), "Ch" for Chinese, "Jp" for Japanese, and "In" for Indian. Unlike the 1890 census, the attempt to further categorize the Black population was abandoned; the term Mulatto was dropped. The 1900 census was the first to use the term "Negro or of Negro descent" when referring to Blacks.

On a separate schedule for Indians, efforts were made to record the individual's tribe, as well as the tribe of his or her father and mother. There also was an attempt to determine the amount of Indian and other blood for American Indians. Specific instructions were provided to enumerators to write 0 if the Indian has no White blood and write either  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ , or other fraction of White blood. The country of birth was also ascertained for Indians to distinguish between Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

#### Census of 1910

For the 1810 through 1900 censuses, temporary census offices were established to collect the census and disbanded after the census was completed. A permanent Bureau of the Census was established in 1902, and the 1910 census was the first taken by this newly established agency.

Consistent with previous censuses, the race of the individual was recorded by the enumerators in the column headed "Color or race." Racial categories used in the 1910 census were essentially the same as those used in the 1900 census, except there was once



**"INDIAN POPULATION"**

(23"x16", printed on two sides, space for 20 entries on each side, reverse side was identical except that lines were numbered 21 to 40 and instructions were continued). Inquiries

numbered 1-32 were same as inquiries numbered 1-32 on "1910 - Population." (See pp. 40 and 41.)

(face, bottom, left)

	Tribe of this Indian.	Tribe of Father of this Indian.	Tribe of Mother of this Indian.	PROPORTION OF INDIAN AND OTHER BLOOD.			Number of times married.	Whether now living in polygamy.	If living in polygamy, whether the wife is alien.
				Indian.	White.	Negro.			
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1									
2									
3									

Figure 4  
1910 Census Indian Population

again an effort to differentiate the Black population into those who were full-blooded and those who were not. "Enumerators were instructed to assign the letter 'B' only to those individuals whom they considered full-blooded Negroes, while the term 'Mulatto' included all other persons having some proportion or perceptible trace of Negro blood."<sup>10</sup>

The 1910 census also included an "Other race" designation. For individuals whom the Enumerators were not able to categorize as White, Black, Mulatto, Chinese, Japanese, or Indian, "Ot" (for Other) was used. Enumerators were instructed to write the race of individuals who reported as "Other" on the left-hand margin of the schedule.

Much like in previous censuses, a separate schedule was used to enumerate the Indian population, and the question on race on the Indian schedule was similar to the one on the general population schedule. In addition, a supplemental schedule for the Indian population was used throughout the United States to collect information such as the degree of blood and tribe. "F" was used for full-blood and "M" for mixed blood (see Figure 4).

### Census of 1920

The racial categories for the 1920 census were the same as those for the 1910 census, but there was no separate schedule for Indians.

### Census of 1930

The racial categories used in the 1930 census were expanded to 10. In addition to White, Negro, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and Other, four new categories were introduced: Mexican, Filipino, Hindu, and Korean.

The hypo-descent or one drop rule with respect to racial reporting of Blacks was first introduced in the 1930 census. Enumerators were given specific instructions for categorizing the population racially:

A person of mixed White and Negro blood was to be returned as Negro, no matter how small the percentage of Negro blood; someone part Indian and part Negro also was to be listed as Negro unless the Indian blood predominated and the person was generally accepted as an Indian in the community. A person of mixed White and Indian blood was to be returned as an Indian, except where the percentage of Indian blood was very small or where he or she was regarded as White in the community. For persons reported as American Indian in Column 12 (color or race), Columns 19 and 20 were to be used to indicate the degree of Indian blood and the tribe, instead of the birthplace of father and mother.<sup>11</sup>

Any mixture of "White" and some "Other race" was reported according to the race of the parent who was not White; mixtures of colored races other than Black were listed according to the father's race.

During the 1920s, Mexico was a major contributor to the immigrant population. To obtain separate figures for Mexicans, interviewers were instructed that everyone born in Mexico, or having parents born in Mexico, who was not definitely White, Negro, Indian, Chinese, or Japanese, were recorded as Mexican.

The Filipino racial category was added to capture the growing Filipino population. Filipinos began to immigrate to the United States in the early 1900s. They came as laborers, mostly in agriculture and domestic service.

### Census of 1940

The 1940 census introduced many innovations, including the use of advanced statistical sampling. Much like the 1930 census, Enumerators indicated the race of the individual in the "Color or Race" column. Racial categories used were: White, Negro, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Hindu, and Korean, and there were instructions on the schedule to "spell out Other races." The only change from the 1930 census for race was that Mexicans were listed as White unless they were definitely Indians or some race other than White.

Before the 1940 census, Eskimos and Aleuts were included in the "Indian" racial category, but in 1940 they were enumerated separately in Alaska.

### Census of 1950

In the 1950 census the term used to categorize race was changed from "Color or Race" to just "Race" (see Figure 5). The racial categories on the schedule were: White (W), Negro (Neg), American Indian (Ind), Japanese (Jap), Chinese (Chi), Filipino (Fil), and Other race (the enumerator was to spell out what that other race represented).

Absent from the race groups listed on the schedule were Hindu and Korean. The Indian racial category was modified to include the word "American."

In 1950, an attempt also was made to categorize as separate groups some tri-racial mixtures of White, Negro, and Indian ancestry living in certain compact communities in the eastern United States. "These communities have existed for some time and were locally recognized by special names, such as Siouian or Croatan, Moor, and Tunica."<sup>12</sup> These groups were included in the "Nonwhite" total under the category "Other race" in census data tabulations. This new procedure resulted in an apparent decrease in the number of Indians for several of the southern states, particularly North Carolina.

Is this person on a farm (or ranch)?		4		(Yes or No)	
RELATIONSHIP Give relationship of person to head of the household, as follows: Wife Daughter Son Mother-in-law Father-in-law Lodger Maid Boarder Partner, etc.		8			
RACE White (W) Negro (N) Indian (I) Japanese (J) Chinese (C) Filipino (F) Other (O) Specify		9			
SEX Male (M) Female (F)		10			
How old was he on his last birthday? (In years, months, and days)		11			
Is he now married, widowed, divorced, single, or never married?		12		(Mar., Wid., Div., or Never)	
What State (or foreign country) was he born in?		13			
If he was born in a foreign country, give name of country.		14			
What was this person doing most of last week—working, attending school, or something else?		15		(Specify work, school, or other activity)	
If he is doing any work at all, how many hours did he work last week?		16		(Specify hours)	
If he is doing any work at all, what is his occupation?		17		(Specify occupation)	
If he is doing any work at all, what is his industry?		18		(Specify industry)	
If he is doing any work at all, what is his business?		19		(Specify business)	
If he is doing any work at all, what is his profession?		20		(Specify profession)	

Figure 5  
1950 Census

## POPULATION INQUIRIES

The responses supplied by householders to the inquiries shown below were transcribed by enumerators to machine-readable forms, 14-1/8" x 17-1/4", which were the official 1960 schedules.

Only data items collected for tabulation are shown here. For identification items, screening questions, and format, see bibliography item 4.

What is the relationship of each person to the head of this household? (For example, wife, son, daughter, grandson, mother-in-law, lodger, lodger's wife) (P3)	Male or Female (M or F) (P4)	Is this person— White Negro American Indian Japanese Chinese Filipino Hawaiian Part Hawaiian Aleut Eskimo (etc.)? (P5)	When was this person born? (P6) Month      Year	Is this person— Married Widowed Divorced Separated Single (never married)? (Leave blank for children born after March 31, 1946) (P7)
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Figure 6  
1960 Census

## Census of 1960

The 1960 census was the first in which the mail was used extensively to conduct the census. Census questionnaires were delivered by the Post Office about 10 days to a week before the census to each residential address in the United States to which the post office made delivery and, in rural post offices, to each post office for a residence. Householders were asked to fill out the form and hold it for the enumerator's visit. Self-enumeration had been used on a very limited scale previously, but 1960 was the first time it was made a major part of the decennial. As a result of the use of self-identification, the format of the question on race changed (see Figure 6). The question asked, "Is this person—White, Negro, American Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, Part Hawaiian, Aleut, Eskimo (etc.)?"

For the first time in our history, Hawaiian, Part Hawaiian, Aleut, and Eskimo were categorized separately. The Eskimo and Aleut categories applied only to Alaska, and the Hawaiian and Part Hawaiian applied to Hawaii.

If the question on race had not been answered when the Enumerator arrived at the residence, the Enumerator was instructed to determine the race of the respondent by observation, and to assume that the race of all related individuals living at the residence was the same.

In the 1960 census, enumerators were instructed to record:

Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, or other persons of Latin American descent as "White" unless they were definitely of Negro, Indian, or other non-white race. Enumerators also classified such responses as Italian, Portuguese, Polish, Syrian, Lebanese, and other European and Near Eastern nationalities as White. Negroes and persons of mixed White and Negro parentage were marked as Negro. A person of mixed Indian and Negro blood was classified as Negro unless the enumerator knew that the Indian blood very definitely predominated and that the person was regarded in the community as an Indian. The enumerator marked "American Indian" for full-blooded Indians, and also for persons of mixed White and Indian blood if he could determine that they were enrolled on an Indian tribal or agency roll or if he knew that they were regarded as Indians in the community where they lived.<sup>13</sup>

<b>2. HOW IS EACH PERSON RELATED TO THE HEAD OF THIS HOUSEHOLD?</b> <i>Fill one circle.</i> <i>If "Other relative of head," also give exact relationship, for example, mother-in-law, brother, niece, grandson, etc.</i> <i>If "Other not related to head," also give exact relationship, for example, partner, maid, etc.</i>	<b>3. SEX</b> <input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female <i>Fill one circle</i>	<b>4. COLOR OR RACE</b> <i>Fill one circle.</i> <i>If "Indian (American)," also give tribe</i> <i>If "Other," also give race</i>
<input type="radio"/> Head of household <input type="radio"/> Wife of head <input type="radio"/> Son or daughter of head <input type="radio"/> Other relative of head— <i>Print exact relationship</i> <input type="radio"/> Roomer, boarder, lodger <input type="radio"/> Patient or inmate <input type="radio"/> Other not related to head— <i>Print exact relationship</i>	<input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female	<input type="radio"/> White <input type="radio"/> Negro or Black <input type="radio"/> Indian (Amer.)— <i>Print tribe</i> <input type="radio"/> Japanese <input type="radio"/> Chinese <input type="radio"/> Filipino <input type="radio"/> Hawaiian <input type="radio"/> Korean <input type="radio"/> Other— <i>Print race</i>

Figure 7  
1970 Census

In 1960, people who reported mixed parentage of White and any other race were categorized according to the other race, that is, the "racial minority," mixtures of races other than White were categorized according to the race of the father.

### Census of 1970

For the 1970 census, about 70% of the housing units received a questionnaire by mail to complete and mail back to the census district office. In the remaining areas, the data were collected via the enumerator. In instances where a questionnaire was mailed to a respondent, but the respondent failed to return the form, data on race were obtained by the Enumerator showing the respondent a flashcard from which to indicate race. During personal visits and when the interview was conducted using the telephone, enumerators were instructed to ask respondents "What is . . . 's race?" In such cases, the respondent's race was assumed for all other related members of the household, unless the enumerator learned otherwise. Data collected by self-identification were thought to be of higher quality than when obtained by Enumerator observation.

The question on race continued to be characterized by consideration of color, tribal status, and Asian national origin groups. A separate category for Korean was added because of their increased immigration.

Under the heading "Color or Race," respondents were instructed to fill one circle for the race that they most closely identified with. There were nine categories: White; Negro or Black; Indian (Amer.) (respondents were instructed to print the name of their tribe); Japanese; Chinese; Filipino; Hawaiian; Korean; and Other (respondents were to print the name of the other race). The question on Color or Race included the categories shown in Figure 7, in the District of Columbia and all states except Alaska. In Alaska, the categories "Aleut" and "Eskimo" were substituted for "Hawaiian" and "Korean." This question was not asked in Puerto Rico, but was asked in American Samoa, the Canal Zone, the Virgin Islands, and Guam.

The categories used in 1970 were basically the same as those used in 1960, except that Korean was not listed in 1960. The wording of the category "Negro" was changed to "Negro or Black." In all instances where data on race were filled by the Enumerator, the respondent's relatives living in the unit were assumed to be of the same race unless the census taker learned otherwise.

For people of mixed parentage who were in doubt about their classification, the race of the person's father was used. (In 1960, respondents who reported mixed parentage of White and any other race were categorized according to the other races; mixtures of races other than White were categorized according to the race of the father.)

Much like the 1960 census, the groups designated as "Non-White" included Negroes, American Indians, Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, Korean, Hawaiian, Asian Indians, Malaysians, Eskimo, Aleuts, and so forth. Asian Indians and Malaysians were categorized as White in the 1970 census. People of Mexican birth who were not definitely Indian or of another non-white race were categorized as "White."

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, with extensions and amendments, led to the need for data on race for small geographic areas. These data are needed for drawing district boundaries for congressional and state elections; for enforcement of federal, state, and local civil rights statutes; for allocating funds; and for program administration.

The use of self-identification through the Mailout/Mail back technique heightened public awareness of the racial categories and led to demands that the racial categories be expanded to reflect the increasing diversity of the population that was being fueled by immigration. Changes in the racial composition of the United States during the 1960s and 1970s demonstrate the effect of major changes in immigration laws, including the arrival of Southeast Asian refugees from the upheaval related to the Vietnam conflict.

### Census of 1980

Data on race were collected in the 1980 census using self-enumeration. Unlike the previous census, the term "Color or Race" was not used. The 1980 question on race was in a question format with response categories to be filled by the respondent (see Figure 8). The definition of the race groups was expanded from the 1970 census to comply with the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) standards for racial and ethnic populations. In 1977, the OMB issued standards that all federal agencies were to use to collect, tabulate, and present data on race. The standards identified four race groups: White, Black, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Asian or Pacific Islanders. It also stated that additional race groups could be used to collect data if the additional groups could be collapsed back into the four minimum race groups.

The OMB standards also identified Hispanics as an ethnic group and stated that Hispanics may be of any race. The 1980 census was the first to collect information on the Hispanic population of all households. Respondents who reported a Spanish ethnicity were no longer collapsed into the White race group.

Based on the standards, the American Indian category was expanded to include entries such as, Canadian Indians, French-American Indians, and Spanish American Indians. The category of Asian and Pacific Islander included people who indicated their race as Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Asian Indian, Korean, Vietnamese, Hawaiian, Samoan, or Guamanian, as well as people who offered Asian and Pacific Islander groups such as Cambodian, Laotian, Pakistani, and Fiji Islander under the Other race category. Write-in entries of Nipponese and Japanese American were categorized as Japanese, and entries of Taiwanese and Cantonese as Chinese.

Here are the QUESTIONS ↓	These are the columns for ANSWERS → Please fill one column for each person listed in Question 1.	PERSON in column 1		PERSON in column 2		PERSON in column 3
		Last name	First name	Last name	First name	
2. How is this person related to the person in column 1?  Fill one circle.  If "Other relative" of person in column 1, give exact relationship, such as mother-in-law, niece, grandson, etc.		<i>START</i> In this column with the household member (or one of the members) in whose name the home is owned or rented. If there is no such person, start in this column with any adult household member.		If relative of person in column 1: <input type="radio"/> Husband/wife <input type="radio"/> Father/mother <input type="radio"/> Son/daughter <input type="radio"/> Other relative <input type="radio"/> Brother/sister		If relative of: <input type="radio"/> Husband <input type="radio"/> Son <input type="radio"/> Brother
3. Sex. Fill one circle.		<input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female		<input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female		<input type="radio"/> F
4. Is this person —  Fill one circle.		<input type="radio"/> White <input type="radio"/> Asian Indian <input type="radio"/> Black or Negro <input type="radio"/> Hawaiian <input type="radio"/> Japanese <input type="radio"/> Guamanian <input type="radio"/> Chinese <input type="radio"/> Samoan <input type="radio"/> Filipino <input type="radio"/> Eskimo <input type="radio"/> Korean <input type="radio"/> Aleut <input type="radio"/> Vietnamese <input type="radio"/> Other — Specify <input type="radio"/> Indian (Amer.) Print tribe →		<input type="radio"/> White <input type="radio"/> Asian Indian <input type="radio"/> Black or Negro <input type="radio"/> Hawaiian <input type="radio"/> Japanese <input type="radio"/> Guamanian <input type="radio"/> Chinese <input type="radio"/> Samoan <input type="radio"/> Filipino <input type="radio"/> Eskimo <input type="radio"/> Korean <input type="radio"/> Aleut <input type="radio"/> Vietnamese <input type="radio"/> Other — Specify <input type="radio"/> Indian (Amer.) Print tribe →		<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5 <input type="radio"/> 6 <input type="radio"/> 7 <input type="radio"/> 8 <input type="radio"/> 9 <input type="radio"/> 10 <input type="radio"/> 11 <input type="radio"/> 12 <input type="radio"/> 13 <input type="radio"/> 14 <input type="radio"/> 15 <input type="radio"/> 16 <input type="radio"/> 17 <input type="radio"/> 18 <input type="radio"/> 19 <input type="radio"/> 20 <input type="radio"/> 21 <input type="radio"/> 22 <input type="radio"/> 23 <input type="radio"/> 24 <input type="radio"/> 25 <input type="radio"/> 26 <input type="radio"/> 27 <input type="radio"/> 28 <input type="radio"/> 29 <input type="radio"/> 30 <input type="radio"/> 31 <input type="radio"/> 32 <input type="radio"/> 33 <input type="radio"/> 34 <input type="radio"/> 35 <input type="radio"/> 36 <input type="radio"/> 37 <input type="radio"/> 38 <input type="radio"/> 39 <input type="radio"/> 40 <input type="radio"/> 41 <input type="radio"/> 42 <input type="radio"/> 43 <input type="radio"/> 44 <input type="radio"/> 45 <input type="radio"/> 46 <input type="radio"/> 47 <input type="radio"/> 48 <input type="radio"/> 49 <input type="radio"/> 50 <input type="radio"/> 51 <input type="radio"/> 52 <input type="radio"/> 53 <input type="radio"/> 54 <input type="radio"/> 55 <input type="radio"/> 56 <input type="radio"/> 57 <input type="radio"/> 58 <input type="radio"/> 59 <input type="radio"/> 60 <input type="radio"/> 61 <input type="radio"/> 62 <input type="radio"/> 63 <input type="radio"/> 64 <input type="radio"/> 65 <input type="radio"/> 66 <input type="radio"/> 67 <input type="radio"/> 68 <input type="radio"/> 69 <input type="radio"/> 70 <input type="radio"/> 71 <input type="radio"/> 72 <input type="radio"/> 73 <input type="radio"/> 74 <input type="radio"/> 75 <input type="radio"/> 76 <input type="radio"/> 77 <input type="radio"/> 78 <input type="radio"/> 79 <input type="radio"/> 80 <input type="radio"/> 81 <input type="radio"/> 82 <input type="radio"/> 83 <input type="radio"/> 84 <input type="radio"/> 85 <input type="radio"/> 86 <input type="radio"/> 87 <input type="radio"/> 88 <input type="radio"/> 89 <input type="radio"/> 90 <input type="radio"/> 91 <input type="radio"/> 92 <input type="radio"/> 93 <input type="radio"/> 94 <input type="radio"/> 95 <input type="radio"/> 96 <input type="radio"/> 97 <input type="radio"/> 98 <input type="radio"/> 99 <input type="radio"/> 100

Figure 8  
1980 Census

In the 1980 census, people who did not categorize themselves in one of the specific race categories, but marked "Other" and entered a response such as Cuban, Puerto Rican, Mexican, or Dominican were included in the "Other race" category; in the 1970 census, most of these people were included in the White category.

For respondents who provided a multiple response to the race question, the race of the person's mother was used; however, if a single response was not provided for the person's mother, the first race reported by the person was used. This was a modification from the 1970 procedures, where the race of the person's father was used.

In the 1980 census, enumerators were instructed to ask and mark the race with which the individual most closely identified. If one race response was not possible, as in the case of a racial mixture, the mother's race was reported. If this was not satisfactory, the first racial group given was entered. In further contrast with 1970, "Brown," "Mulatto," and related terms could be entered as "Other" (unless one of the listed categories was chosen).

### Census of 1990

The 1990 census question on race, much like the 1980 question, included a number of socio-cultural (or national origin) groups. There were 14 separate response categories: White, Black or Negro, Indian (Amer.), Eskimo, Aleut, and nine Asian and Pacific Islander groups; and two residual categories (Other Asian and Pacific Islander and Other race). Three categories required write-ins: Indian (Amer.), where respondents were asked to print the name of their enrolled or principal tribe, and for those who reported as "Other Asian or Pacific Islander" or "Other race," who were asked to write in the name of their group or race. The 1990 question on race differed substantially from the 1980 one (see Figure 9). First, the term "race" was reinserted in the question wording and specific instructions were provided to respondents to help clarify the intent of the question. Also, the question wording and formatting were changed to improve reporting for such groups as American Indians, Asians, and Pacific Islanders. To improve reporting among the Asian

<p><b>4. Race</b> Fill ONE circle for the race that the person considers himself/herself to be.</p> <p>If <b>Indian (Amer.)</b>, print the name of the enrolled or principal tribe. _____</p> <p>If <b>Other Asian or Pacific Islander (API)</b>, print one group, for example: Hmong, Fijian, Laotian, Thai, Tongan, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on. _____</p> <p>If <b>Other race</b>, print race. _____</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> White</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Black or Negro</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Indian (Amer.) (Print the name of the enrolled or principal tribe.) _____</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Eskimo</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Aleut</p> <p><b>Asian or Pacific Islander (API)</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/> Chinese</td> <td><input type="radio"/> Japanese</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/> Filipino</td> <td><input type="radio"/> Asian Indian</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/> Hawaiian</td> <td><input type="radio"/> Samoan</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/> Korean</td> <td><input type="radio"/> Guamanian</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="radio"/> Vietnamese</td> <td><input type="radio"/> Other API _____</td> </tr> </table> <p><input type="radio"/> Other race (Print race) _____</p>	<input type="radio"/> Chinese	<input type="radio"/> Japanese	<input type="radio"/> Filipino	<input type="radio"/> Asian Indian	<input type="radio"/> Hawaiian	<input type="radio"/> Samoan	<input type="radio"/> Korean	<input type="radio"/> Guamanian	<input type="radio"/> Vietnamese	<input type="radio"/> Other API _____
<input type="radio"/> Chinese	<input type="radio"/> Japanese										
<input type="radio"/> Filipino	<input type="radio"/> Asian Indian										
<input type="radio"/> Hawaiian	<input type="radio"/> Samoan										
<input type="radio"/> Korean	<input type="radio"/> Guamanian										
<input type="radio"/> Vietnamese	<input type="radio"/> Other API _____										

Figure 9  
1990 Census

and Pacific Islander groups and to capture other Asian and Pacific Islander groups not listed separately on the questionnaire, the Census Bureau added the response category "Other Asian and Pacific Islander (Other API)," and the heading "Asian and Pacific Islander."

The Census Bureau initially tested a version of the question on race that did not include a separate listing of the detailed Asian and Pacific Islander groups. "However, the Asian and Pacific Islander community had strong misgivings about the quality of data for the detailed groups and wording was included in the Census appropriation bill to list the groups separately."<sup>14</sup>

### Census 2000

The method for collecting data for Census 2000 is similar to that in the 1990 census. Self-identification is the method respondents are to use to complete the census. However, the format of the question on race is quite different from the one used in 1990, and from all previous census (see Figure 10). First, it allows respondents to report more than one race. Second, it uses one category for "American Indians" or "Alaska Natives" rather than separate categories for Indian (Amer.), Eskimo, and Aleut. Also, "American" is spelled out, much like it was in the 1950 census, and Alaska Natives are asked to write-in the name of their enrolled or principal tribe, much like American Indians. Third, based on the revisions to the OMB standards, categories for Asians and for Pacific Islanders are listed separately in three columns on the short form, and they are no longer combined in the broad category "Asian or Pacific Islander." This broad category has been split into two separate groups: "Asian" and "Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander." Fourth, the question on race follows the question on Hispanic origin. These changes are the result of an extensive research program conducted by the Census Bureau, as well as major changes to the statistical standards on race and ethnicity issued by the OMB.



**8. What is Person 1's race? Mark ☒ one or more races to indicate what this person considers himself/herself to be.**

☐ White  
☐ Black, African Am., or Negro  
☐ American Indian or Alaska Native — *Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.* Z

☐ Asian Indian   ☐ Japanese   ☐ Native Hawaiian  
☐ Chinese   ☐ Korean   ☐ Guamanian or Chamorro  
☐ Filipino   ☐ Vietnamese   ☐ Samoan  
☐ Other Asian — *Print race.* Z   ☐ Other Pacific Islander — *Print race.* Z

☐ Some other race — *Print race.* Z

→ **If more people live here, continue with Person 2.**

Figure 10  
2000 Census

Statistical Policy Directive Number 15 was used for over 20 years and came to be criticized for not reflecting the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the country. In 1993, the OMB began a review of the standards. During the review period, both congressional and public hearings were convened and extensive research was conducted on such issues as the addition of new classifications, the sequencing of the questions on Hispanic origin and race, and the best way to capture and measure the increased racial and ethnic diversity. To study the above issues, the OMB established a federal interagency committee.

The issue of capturing and measuring the increased racial and ethnic diversity engendered the most controversy. Revisions to the standards were issued on October 30, 1997<sup>15</sup> and were incorporated in Census 2000. See Table 2 for the current definitions of the various race groups.

Census 2000 will include separate response boxes for White, Black, African (Am.) or Negro, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Other Asian, Native Hawaiian, Guamanian or Chamorro, Samoan, Other Pacific Islander, and Some other race. The form requests additional write-in information for several responses: American Indian or Alaska Native, where the respondent is asked to provide the name of his or her enrolled or principal tribe; and "Other Asian," "Other Pacific Islander," and "Some other race" where the respondent is to provide the name of the race group with which he or she identifies.

Although the Census Bureau has 15 racial categories, these categories collapse into the five race groups identified by the OMB, as well as the "Some other race" category. The

Table 2  
The Office of Management and Budget's Categories and Definitions of Race Groups

<i>Category</i>	<i>Definition</i>
American Indians or Alaska Native	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment.
Asian	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including for example, Cambodian, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.
Black or African American	A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. Terms such as "Haitian" or "Negro" can be used in addition to "Black or African American."
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
White	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

Census Bureau obtained an exemption from the OMB to include a "Some other race" category for respondents who do not identify racially in any of the specified categories shown on the questionnaire.

After being included as one of the items to be asked of all households in the 1980 census, the Hispanic origin question has led to increased reporting of Hispanics in the "Other race" category to the question on race and non-response of Hispanics to the question on race. The number of people reporting in the Other race category grew from less than half a million in 1970 to about 10 million in the 1990 census. Over 95% of the responses in this category reflect Hispanic ethnicities. Much research has been conducted on this phenomenon that led to the decision of the OMB to recommend that, if federal agencies use two separate questions to collect data on Hispanic origin and race, the question on Hispanic origin should precede the question on race. By doing so, it is hoped that there will be a reduction in the proportion of Hispanic ethnicities reported in the race question, as well as a reduction of non-response by Hispanics to the question on race.

### CONCLUSION

The above shows how race groups on the census forms are the result of changing social usage and growing diversity fueled by immigration. The response categories grew from six in 1790, to 16 in 1990, and then back to 15 for Census 2000. The concept of race used by the Census Bureau for the White, Black, American Indian, Chinese, and Japanese populations has generally been consistent since 1940. Categories for other groups were added throughout the time period to reflect changes in immigration laws and social policies.

What will the 23<sup>rd</sup> census reveal with respect to race? What clues will there be to long-term trends? No one can be certain, except to predict that argument about the impending count will continue. Some people will not know what count of the racial populations to use. Some will use the count of the single race category, whereas others may opt to use a count that includes any mentioning of a specific race group. Federal agencies are working to develop guidance on how data for respondents reporting two or more races will be used for program development and implementation.

### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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